



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - Public distribution

Date: 9/05/2007

GAIN Report Number: HK7018

## Hong Kong

### Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

### Potential Impact of HK's Proposed Preservatives Regulation Changes

2007

**Approved by:**

Philip Shull

U.S. Consulate, Hong Kong

**Prepared by:**

Caroline Yuen

---

**Report Highlights:** U.S. packaged food exports to Hong Kong may be affected by impending amendments to its Preservatives Regulations. The HKG is in the process of bringing its list of permitted preservatives and tolerances into alignment with Codex before the end of 2007. While the permitted level of preservatives in about 70 specified products will be increased, that in 30 specified products will be lowered. Because U.S. tolerances on preservatives do not always follow Codex, some U.S. exports to Hong Kong may be affected by this change. However, even with the amendment, the HKG list remains incomplete. For example, the proposed amendment fails to include some Codex-approved preservatives which are specifically permitted when used in accordance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) e.g. sodium erythorbate. U.S. exporters are encouraged to review the HKG's proposed preservatives list and tolerance levels with their importers and inform us of any common preservatives used in the U.S. which are allowed under Codex but not included on HK's proposed list (link provided in the report). This report lists those preservatives whose new levels will be lower than the existing ones. This amendment is a continuation of the Hong Kong government's attempt to strengthen and update its food import regulations. The HKG implemented new allergen and additive labeling requirements in July 2007, and is planning to institute a nutrition labeling regulation before the end of 2007.

Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Annual Report  
Hong Kong [HK1]  
[HK]



U.S. packaged food exports to Hong Kong may be affected by impending amendment to its Preservatives Regulations. Hong Kong's Center for Food Safety is amending the Preservatives in Food Regulations with the intention to have the amendment process completed before the end of 2007. The amended Regulations will incorporate the food category system as well as the preservatives and antioxidants in Codex General Standards for Food Additives (GSFA). As such, the proposed draft standards may have some preservatives/antioxidants whose new permitted levels will be lower than the current permitted levels, though the permitted level of preservatives in about 70 specified products will be increased. Because U.S. tolerances on preservatives do not always follow Codex, U.S. exports to Hong Kong may be affected by this change.

The Center has released a study of the proposed draft standards, which compared the proposed levels of preservatives/antioxidants with the existing permitted levels. The study is available at the following website.

[http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew\\_fstr/whatsnew\\_fstr\\_consult\\_paper.html](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/whatsnew_fstr_consult_paper.html)

Based on the study, this report lists those preservatives/antioxidants whose new levels will be lower than the existing ones. Additionally, it contains permitted levels of the affected preservatives/antioxidants in various countries, including the U.S. (This information is based on a preliminary assessment conducted by a private company and is subject to verification.)

U.S. companies and exporters are encouraged to take a close look of the table below and contact us at [ATOhongkong@usda.gov](mailto:ATOhongkong@usda.gov) if you have any comments on the table, or you discern any potential impact on U.S. food exports to Hong Kong as a result of the proposed changes of preservatives' permitted levels in Hong Kong.

In addition, if there are any preservatives which are commonly used in the processing of certain U.S. food products and are allowed in GSFA, but are not included in the HKG's comparison report, U.S. exporters and industry representatives may want to bring them to our attention and we will consider requesting the Hong Kong government to incorporate those preservatives/antioxidants into the amended Regulations. Presently, we have identified an issue which is to be forwarded to the Hong Kong government for clarification. Sodium erythorbate is an antioxidant according to Codex functional class and Codex allows its use in food in accordance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). However, the HKG's proposed amendment does not explicitly allow its use in food.

The amendment of the Preservatives Regulations is a continuation of the Hong Kong government's attempts to strength and update its food import regulations. In July 2007, Hong Kong implemented new allergen labeling and additive labeling requirements. The government is also planning to institute a nutrition labeling regulation by the end of 2007. The change in import regulations inevitably impacts on U.S. exports to the market. The impact of Hong Kong's proposed nutrition labeling is discussed in report #7011.

## Background

The Hong Kong government is in the process of amending the Preservatives in Food Regulations. According to Hong Kong's consultation document, the future amended Regulations will introduce a food category system based on Codex standard (GSFA – General Standard on Food Additives). Additionally, the proposed amended Regulations will closely follow GSFA with respect to the permitted levels of preservatives and antioxidants. The amended Regulations will allow Hong Kong to incorporate any new version of Codex's GSFA preservatives and antioxidants listings.



In situations where there are local standards for specific preservatives and antioxidants in specified food items but there are no corresponding Codex standards, the Hong Kong government proposed in the consultation paper that those permitted ones currently in the Regulations will continue at current levels.

However, in cases where there are discrepancies of permitted levels between the GSFA and the current Regulations, the Hong Kong government intends to adopt the ones listed in the GSFA for the sake of harmonization. As such, there are cases that certain preservatives will have a lower permitted level under the future amended Regulations when compared to the current Regulations.

The Hong Kong government plans to have the Regulation amendment process completed before the end of 2007. The HKG is considering a transition period for the trade to comply with the revised permitted levels of preservatives/antioxidants. While the HKG has not indicated the length of transition period, a government representative said that the transition period of previous food regulation amendments ranged from one to three years. The duration depends very much on the general shelf life of the affected products. During the transition period, the trade would be allowed to comply with either the existing or revised lists of preservatives and antioxidants.

For more information, please refer to Gain Report #7001.

**Table Listing Preservatives/Antioxidants with a Lower Permitted Level under the Proposed Amended Regulations with respect to Various Food Categories (with number provided)**

**1.2 Cheese and analogues**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	Nisin	Sodium nitrate
HK Proposed Regulatory Level	<12.5ppm	<50ppm
HK Current Regulatory Level	may contain nisin	<100ppm
US	<250ppm	not mentioned

**2.1 Fats & Oils essentially free from water & 2.2 Fats emulsions mainly of type water-in-oil**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	BHT	Sorbic acid
Proposed regulatory level	<75ppm	<1000ppm
Current Regulatory level	<160ppm	<2000ppm
France (EU)	<100ppm	-
Denmark (EU)	<100ppm	-
UK (EU)	<100ppm	-
New Zealand	<100ppm	<2000ppm
Australia	<100ppm	<2000ppm
Japan	<200ppm	-

**4.1 Surface-treated fresh fruit**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	orthophenylphenols	diphenyl
Proposed regulatory level	<12mg/kg	<70mg/kg



Current Regulatory level	<10ppm for apples, pears & pineapples; <125ppm for melons; <20ppm for peaches; <70ppm for citrus fruits	<100ppm
China	not mentioned	not mentioned
Taiwan	not mentioned	-
Philippines	not mentioned	not mentioned
<b>US</b>	not mentioned	not mentioned
Australia	not mentioned	not mentioned

#### 4.2 Dried fruit

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<1000ppm
Current Regulatory level	<2000ppm
UK	<2000ppm in peaches, grapes, prunes & fig
Australia & New Zealand	<3000ppm
China	fumigation only, no specified limit

#### 4.3 Fruit in vinegar, oil or brine

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<100 ppm
Current Regulatory level	<350 ppm

#### 4.8 Fruit preparations, including pulp, purees, fruit toppings and coconut milk

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	Sulphur dioxide
Proposed regulatory level	<500ppm
Current Regulatory level	<3000ppm (fruit or fruit pulp <other than tomato pulp> intended for manufacturing purposes) <350ppm (fruit <other than fresh fruit> or fruit pulp not otherwise specified in this Schedule

#### 4.11 Fruit fillings for pastries

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<100ppm
Current Regulatory level	<350ppm (fruit based pie fillings)

#### 4.15 Dried vegetable (including mushrooms and fungi, roots and tubers, pulses and legumes, and aloe vera), seaweeds, and nuts and seeds

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<500 ppm
Current Regulatory level	<2500ppm (cabbage, dehydrated) <550ppm (potatoes, dehydrated) <2000ppm (vegetables, dehydrated, other than cabbage or potato) <150ppm (ginger, dry root)



### 6.3 Starch

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<50ppm
Current Regulatory level	<100ppm (starches, prepared) <70ppm (starch hydrolysed, solid) <450ppm (starch hydrolysed, syrup)

### 8.2 Processed meat, poultry and game products in whole pieces or cut

### 8.3 Processed comminuted meat, poultry and game products

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Nitrites (potassium &amp; sodium)</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<125ppm
Current Regulatory level	<200ppm
China	<150ppm
Canada	<200ppm (except side bacon <120ppm)
UK (EU)	<150ppm (indicative ingoing amount); <50ppm (residual amount); <175ppm for cured bacon
Spain (EU)	<150ppm (indicative ingoing amount); <50ppm (residual amount); <175ppm for cured bacon
Germany (EU)	<150ppm (indicative ingoing amount); <50ppm (residual amount); <175ppm for cured bacon
Italy (EU)	<150ppm (indicative ingoing amount); <50ppm (residual amount); <175ppm for cured bacon
<b>US</b>	<200ppm
Brazil	<150ppm (for breaded and franks products); <1ppm (for breaded items (nuggets and steak))

### 9.1 Fresh mollusks crustaceans and echinoderms

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<100ppm
Current Regulatory level	<200ppm in edible part
UK (EU)	<150ppm
Philippines	<200ppm for fresh crustaceans
Norway	<150ppm
China	not mentioned
<b>US</b>	generally recognized as safe when used in accordance with good manufacturing practice

### 9.2 Processed fish and fish products, including mollusks, crustaceans and echinoderms

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>	<b>Benzoic acid</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<100ppm (for frozen)	<200ppm (for smoked, dried, fermented, and/or



		salted fish & fish products)
Current Regulatory level	<200ppm in edible part	<1000ppm for dried shredded fish
Canada	-	<1000ppm
Taiwan	-	<600ppm
New Zealand (Australia)	-	<2500ppm for semi preserved fish & fish products
UK & Scotland (EU)	<150ppm	-
Philippines	<300ppm	-
Norway	<150ppm	-
China	not mentioned	not mentioned
<b>US</b>	generally recognized as safe when used in accordance with good manufacturing practice	at levels not to exceed good manufacturing practice. Current usage results in a maximum level of 0.1 percent in food.

### 11.1 White sugar, dextrose anhydrous, dextrose monohydrated, fructose

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<15ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm
Australia & New Zealand	<450ppm
China	fumigation only, no specified limit

### 11.2 Powdered sugar, powdered dextrose

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<15ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm
Australia & New Zealand	<450ppm
China	fumigation only, no specified limit

### 11.3 Soft white sugar, soft brown sugar, glucose syrup, dried glucose syrup, raw cane sugar

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<20ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm
Australia & New Zealand	<450ppm
China	fumigation only, no specified limit

### 11.5 Brown sugar, excluding products of food category 11.3

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<40ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm

### 11.6 Other sugars and syrups (e.g. xylose, maple syrup, sugar toppings)

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
-----------------------------	------------------------



Proposed regulatory level	<40ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm sugar or sugar syrups <350ppm flavoring syrups

## 12.6 Mixes for soups and broths

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sorbic acid</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<500ppm
Current Regulatory level	<1500ppm Soup concentrates with a moisture content of not less than 25% and not more than 60%

## 14.1 Fruit juice

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<50ppm
Current Regulatory level	<350ppm
UK	<350 in lemon, lime juice
Australia & New Zealand	<450ppm

## 14.3 Concentrates for fruit juice

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide (as served to consumer)</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<50ppm
Current Regulatory level	<350ppm
UK	<250 in concentrates

## 14.9 Water-based flavored drinks, including "sport," "energy," or "electrolyte" drinks and particulated drinks

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Benzoic acid (for beverage pH<sub>≤</sub>3.5</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<600ppm
Current Regulatory level	<800ppm <160ppm soft drinks for consumption without dilution

### 14.9.1 Fruit juice-based drinks and dry ginger ale

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxides (as served to consumer) (for use in fruit juice-based drinks and dry ginger ale only)</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<70ppm
Current Regulatory level	<350ppm <70ppm soft drinks for consumption without dilution

## 14.11 Beer and malt beverages

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxides</b>
-----------------------------	-------------------------



Proposed regulatory level	<50ppm
Current Regulatory level	<70ppm

**14.13 Grape wines**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxides (except for use in special white wines at 400ppm)</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<350ppm
Current Regulatory level	<450ppm

**14.14 Wine (other than grapes)**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<200ppm
Current Regulatory level	<450ppm
UK	<250- 400
Australia & New Zealand	<250- 300

**14.15 Mead****14.16 Distilled spirituous beverages containing more than 15% alcohol**

Preservatives/ Antioxidants	<b>Sulphur dioxide</b>
Proposed regulatory level	<200ppm
Current Regulatory level	<450ppm